

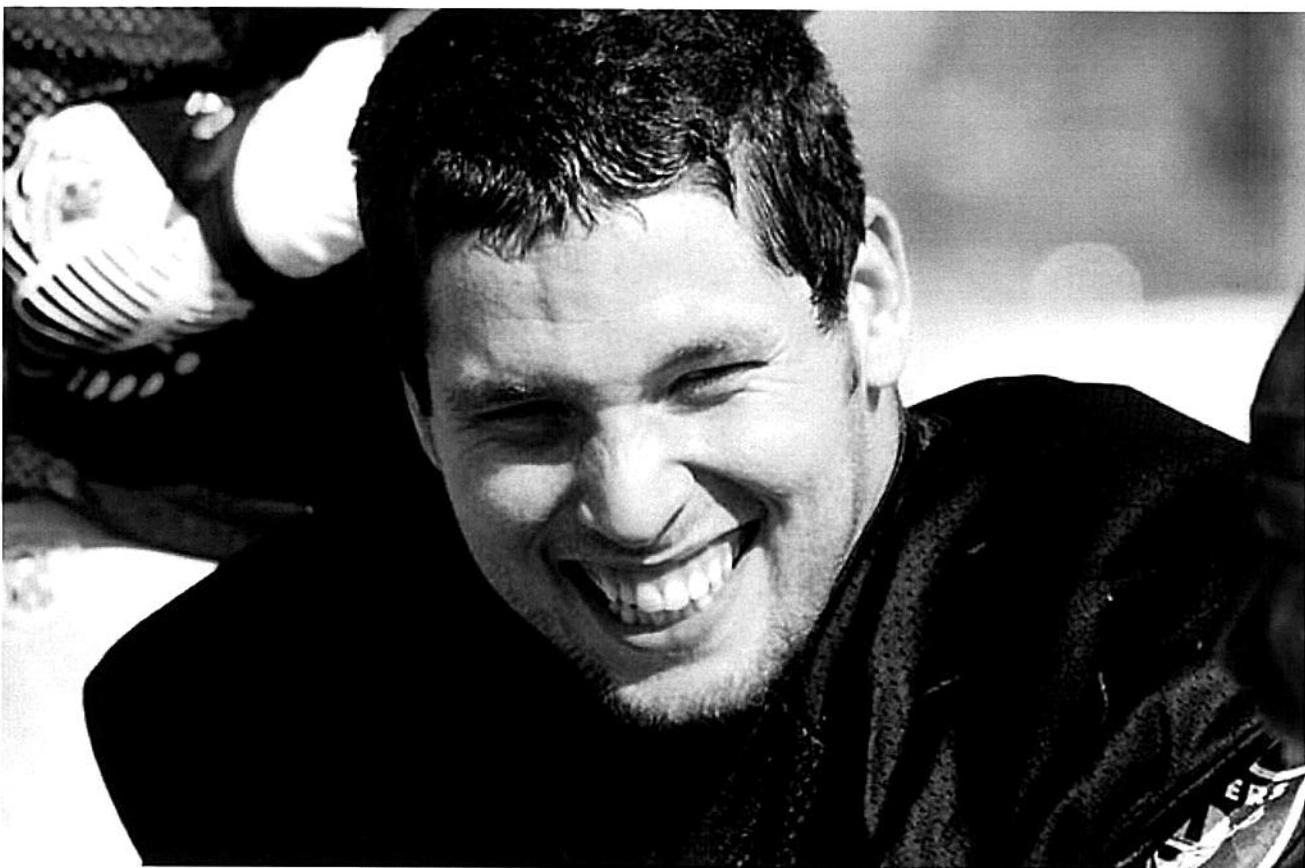
EXHIBIT 5

Memoirs from an NFL Training Camp

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As the final days of freedom wind down, NFL players from around the country take a collective, agonizing sigh as they embark on by far the most challenging period of the year.

It's a time when every man must kiss his family goodbye, remove himself from life's comforts and prepare his mind for a month's worth of pain, heat, exhaustion, torture and, generally speaking, sheer misery.

This is an inside story of training camp in the NFL.

Sometime around the first week in July, offseason workouts, minicamps and organized team activities all come to a conclusion. This is a brief moment of elation with freedom abound, no schedules, money in your pocket and a well-deserved sense of accomplishment, having conquered a rather arduous offseason.

But there looms a dark cloud just overhead, as July signifies the imminent arrival of training camp. For NFL fans, this is a great time of year, as it suggests the glorious beginning of a new football season, full of promise and entertainment.

Before we were sent on our way for the better part of the month, we were given tips and instructions on how to behave, what to watch out for and how to spend our time, as well as a schedule telling us when, where and how to report to camp.

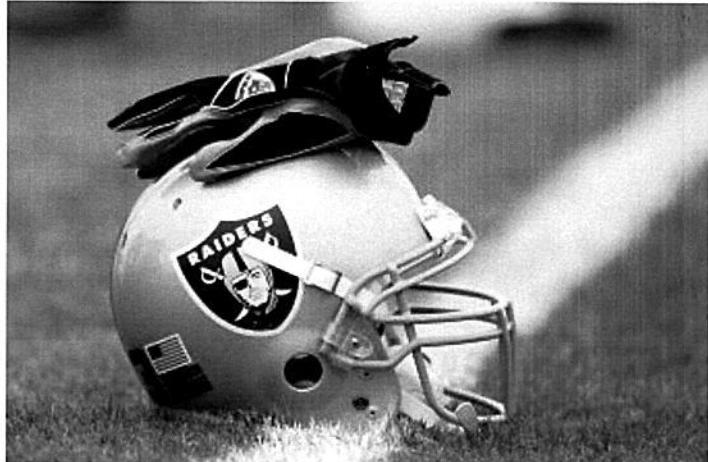
For the Oakland Raiders, we were given the choice to park our cars safely in the facility parking lot and jump on a charter bus to take us far away from the easy weather and cool ocean breeze. To this day, regardless of its bountiful amenities and relaxing wineries, I struggle to think of Napa Valley as anything but a prison.

We arrived at a relatively decent hotel while passing diehard fans camped outside the hotel holding signs and wearing jerseys of their favorite players.

Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

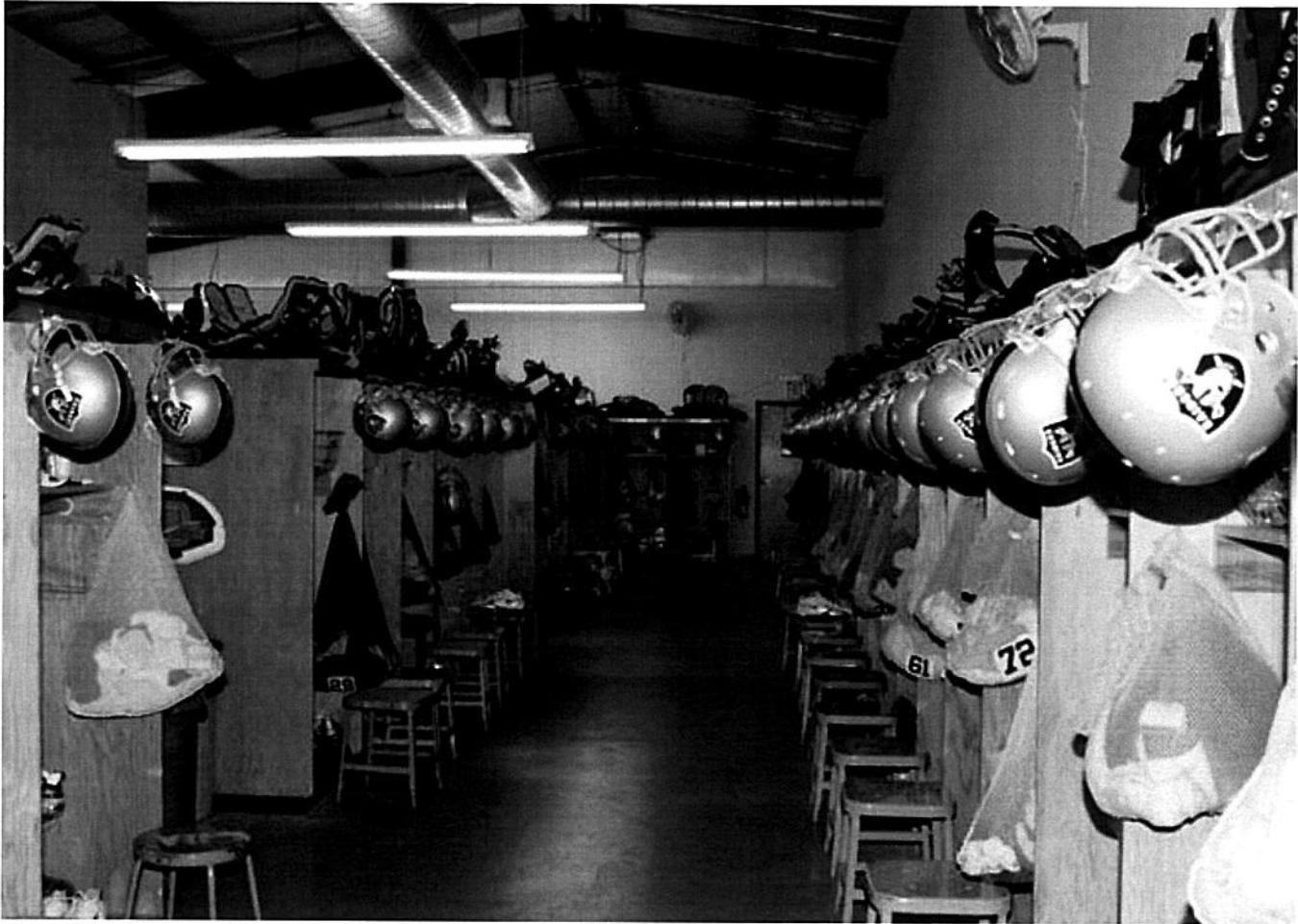
As we stepped off the bus, the summer heat instantly hit us, almost as a warning of what was to come. Then we managed our way through a crowd of cranky athletes holding luggage—some with cute personal pillows, others with full-on sound systems.

Next, we grabbed our room keys, which was when each of us found out what room we'd be staying in and who our roommates would be for the next three weeks.



The nature of these arrangements is anything but democratic. Rookies are almost always paired with other rookies; meanwhile, the big-name veterans are given their own rooms equipped with a king-sized bed and located nearest to the dining area and meeting rooms.

My rookie-year roommate was fellow draft class member and Pac-10 adversary, quarterback Andrew Walter, who spent most of his down time talking on the phone to his fiancée. Because we were strangers in such a small room, you can imagine that these and other personal conversations made for awkward times.



Raiders training camp locker room

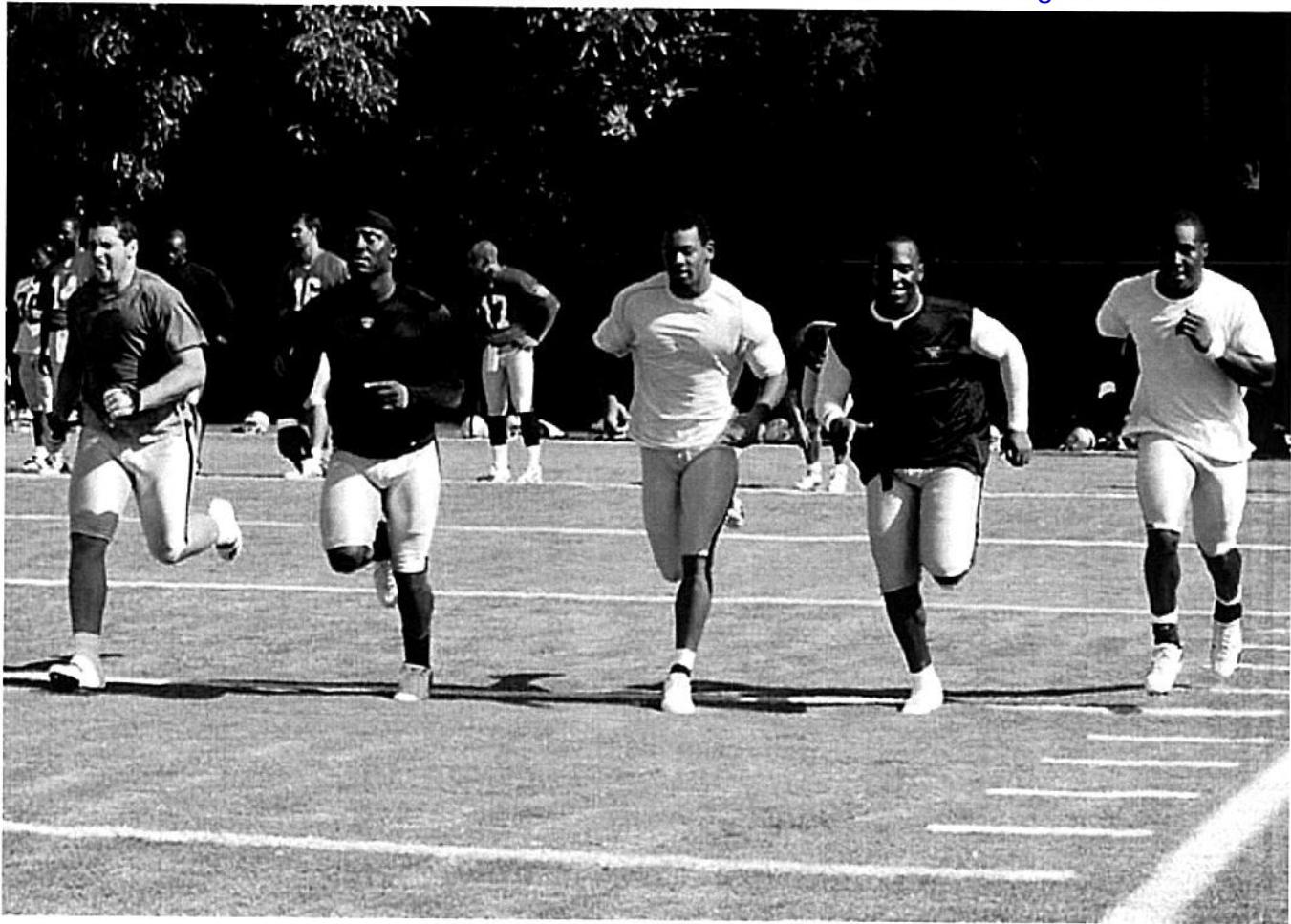
In addition, the new roommates now have to deal with television sharing, NFL-sized snoring, bathroom smells, personal habits and everything in between. But these are the easy parts.

Training camp universally kicks off with an introductory team meeting in the evening of day one. This meeting is designed to highlight the big-picture concepts, such as the entire camp schedule, team expectations, ins and outs of the facility and an inspiring speech (hopefully) from the head coach to preclude the entire upcoming season.

By this time, guys have grown comfortable with one another and their uncontrollable fate. They appear to loosen up and attitudes lighten; jokes can be heard before meetings or in between speakers.

I found it difficult to share in the lightheartedness. This was serious business. I had a lot of work ahead of me and some monumental goals to accomplish.

I could never suppress the weight that lingered on my shoulders, trying to not only make an NFL roster, but to defy all odds and become one of the best players alive. This drive was like a constant leak in my gas tank, and it depleted my mind and body of precious energy as I wasted away on nerves.



Days in an NFL training camp are long and painful. They typically begin at 6 a.m. daily. The first priorities of the day are to eat breakfast, treat your wounds, lift weights and then attend pre-practice meetings, all before the afternoon.

Typically, there are two practices a day, averaging about two hours each. The first practice involves more installation of the playbook and getting the blood flowing in the legs (which can get heavy as the days accumulate). The early-evening practice is designed to be physically grueling and heavy on contact, technique, play execution and full-speed drills.

I wish I could articulate the mental struggle involved in putting your pads and gear on before a practice. Walking into that cold, ugly, wooden locker room reeking of old feet, BENGAY and mold is tough.

Your body has likely been bashed and trampled so much that you can no longer distinguish bruised flesh from normal. With muscles so stiff and fatigued, the brief walk from hotel to locker is a challenge. Your body is screaming for rest; your mind is constantly at the breaking point. My feet would develop massive blisters on the big toes.

Pain becomes relative in the NFL. Amidst all of this, as a rookie trying to make the team on a daily basis, you have no choice but to dig deep, suck it up and slide those battered legs into a pair of freshly-washed, tight, silver practice pants. These were the moments when I thought: Is all of this worth it?

Once on the field and in motion, the mind quickly assimilates, zoning out the horror of your reality, described best as a constant state of absolute exhaustion.

But it's on the field where your spot on the roster is either won or lost. This is your battlefield, and the spoils of this war are employment in the National Football League. In this sport, there is no space for the weak. Everyday, every play must be executed with the intent to impress.

Being drafted in the later rounds afforded me little-to-no latitude in taking a single day off. Everyday was a Super Bowl.

Some of the most violent drills in training camp would come during our full-contact, goal-line stand. This was 11-on-11 with the ball at the 1-yard line. We would run play after play of full-speed, head-on-collision football.

Waiting for my opportunity to get in on this drill was an anxious time. The pressure to impress, coupled with the obvious concerns about the physical nature of the drill, could be a bit nerve-racking. But when your name is called and you head into that huddle, the mind shifts into a heightened state of focus on the job at hand.

I was playing middle linebacker, so I was supposed to read the hand signals from the sideline, then relay the play to the defense. Leading a group of professional football players as a rookie was an interesting feeling, to say the least. In college, I never had to say a word; I would just line up and play. Yet there I was, calling plays, making adjustments, understanding coverages and, most importantly, looking at the field from an entirely different vantage point.

As a middle backer in a goal-line scheme, the objective was clear: Key the fullback's first step and attack downhill at full speed, blowing him up, as well as anything else that happens to get in the way of the ball-carrier. Although simple in its description, the actual execution of this task was a whole other story.

Across the line into the backfield, the biggest fullback on our roster and one of the biggest in the entire league (about 276 pounds) was ready to meet me in a full-speed, head-on collision.

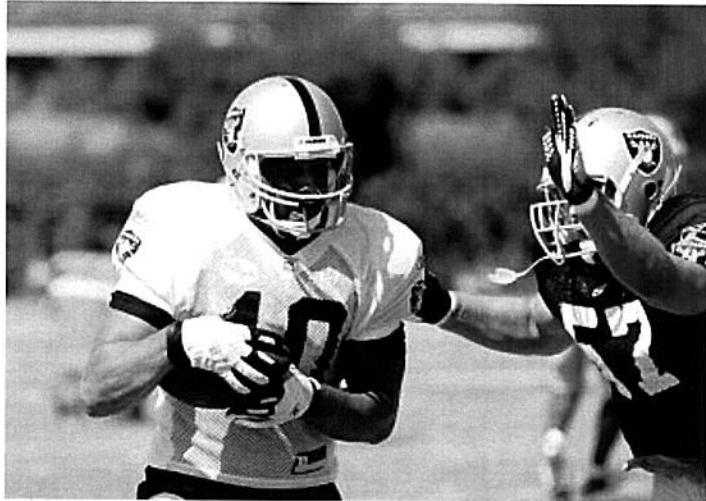
With a deep breath, some rising intensity and all the passion I could muster, I set my sights on the target. These are the moments you make a case for a spot on the 53-man roster. So I made the decision to sacrifice my health and well-being.

With the snap of the ball, I read and reacted to the fullback's first step. I exploded toward the line of scrimmage, headed directly into the gap between the offensive tackle and the tight end.

Meanwhile, the ball-carrier was coming directly at me as the fullback led the way. A massive collision ensued right at the line of scrimmage between me and the fullback; the thunderous noise from our two helmets crashing elicited cheers and excitement from the crowd, as well as fellow teammates.

As our helmets and bodies smashed together, I experienced a sudden flash; the hit itself was painless, as all mental systems shut down for a brief second. When my awareness returned, I was laying on the ground trying to get my wits about me. Lying next to me was the fullback and running back; the latter had fallen short of the end zone, so it appeared that my job was at least somewhat accomplished.

The fullback and I locked eyes. The look we gave each other was clear confirmation that we had just engaged in a collision of rare intensity, and our awareness level was undoubtedly compromised. Both of



Greg Trott/Getty Images

This drill was repeated several times, and the intensity remained the same throughout. I was beginning to make a good impression on the coaches—unfortunately at the cost of some valuable brain cells, for sure.

The fanfare that goes on everyday around training camp is an interesting component to the job. It definitely allows for entertainment on the players' end by giving them something other than men to look at in between action. It also motivated guys to put on a good show.

The passion and dedication of a diehard, lifelong fan of a particular NFL team or player can definitely become a dangerous obsession. I remember watching fans swarm around guys like Randy Moss, Warren Sapp, Jerry Porter and Charles Woodson following practices.

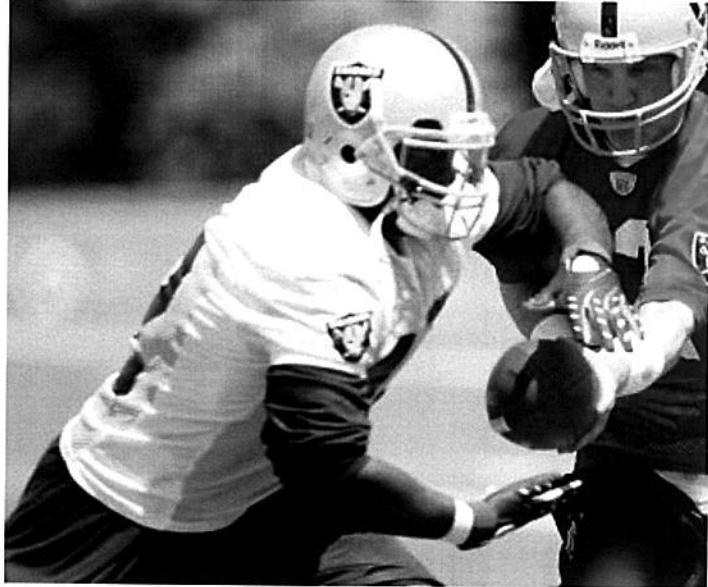
There was a pathway leading from the field to the hotel where fans would line up to yell and scream for the player of their choice to sign various memorabilia. This must have been tough for the big-name guys who were hungry, tired and under a very tight schedule. But they always seemed to handle those moments with such consideration.

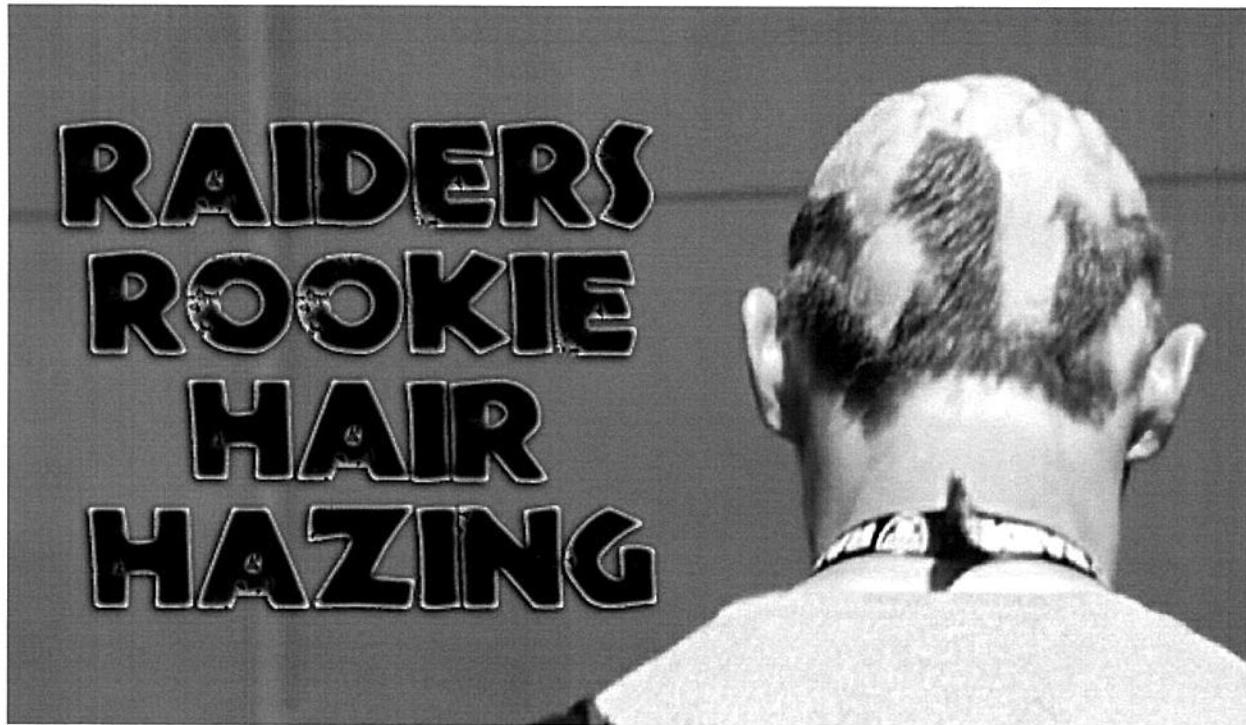
Luckily, us no-names slid right through the crowd unmolested. Even if someone wanted our autograph, they often wouldn't know our names, so they would be unable to get our attention.

I always gave time to a fan who actually knew who I was. Those were the fans that were really special. There is nothing negative about signing autographs, but when you are beyond exhausted and only have a few moments of free time, autographs can become a bit tedious.

Life in training camp can be particularly hard for several reasons. According to tradition, rookies are expected to carry out certain daily tasks, such as carrying the helmet and shoulder pads of a veteran player or giving up their spot in line while waiting to get taped or stretched by the training staff. None of this made camp any easier.

Another NFL training tradition is rookie hazing. In the week before our first preseason game, the veterans would round up the rookies and present each with an ultimatum: Either let your positional vets give you a haircut of their choice, or get tied to a goal post while they dump ice water on you, and then cover your entire body with shaving cream.





This is not me but is a similar outcome of hazing. Courtesy of Jay Koot

I opted for the haircut, and the result looked as if my hair was falling out in patches. I looked diseased, but I didn't mind, really; it was all in good fun. After all, I didn't have a whole lot of reason to look good while trapped in a hotel for weeks.

One of the most underrated challenges every player faces in camp is the lack of entertainment, stimulation and fun. After a few weeks with nothing but hard work, meetings and redundancy, guys begin to get a little testy.

In order to satiate this need for fun, teams typically *force* the rookies to create a talent show for the entire team. This is always an exciting and much-anticipated nightly event for veterans and coaches, who can finally let out their built-up tension with some therapeutic laughter and team bonding.

From a rookie perspective, this was a dreaded event, as it forced us to dedicate precious down time to the cause. We had the freedom to work together or on our own in any fashion, but every rookie must perform by the time training camp is over. Some guys would do magic tricks or tell jokes, others would sing and dance.

The most common outcomes of these performances are booing, object throwing and public ridicule. This is a fairly effective motivator for rookies to want to give their best effort towards the "Rookie Show."

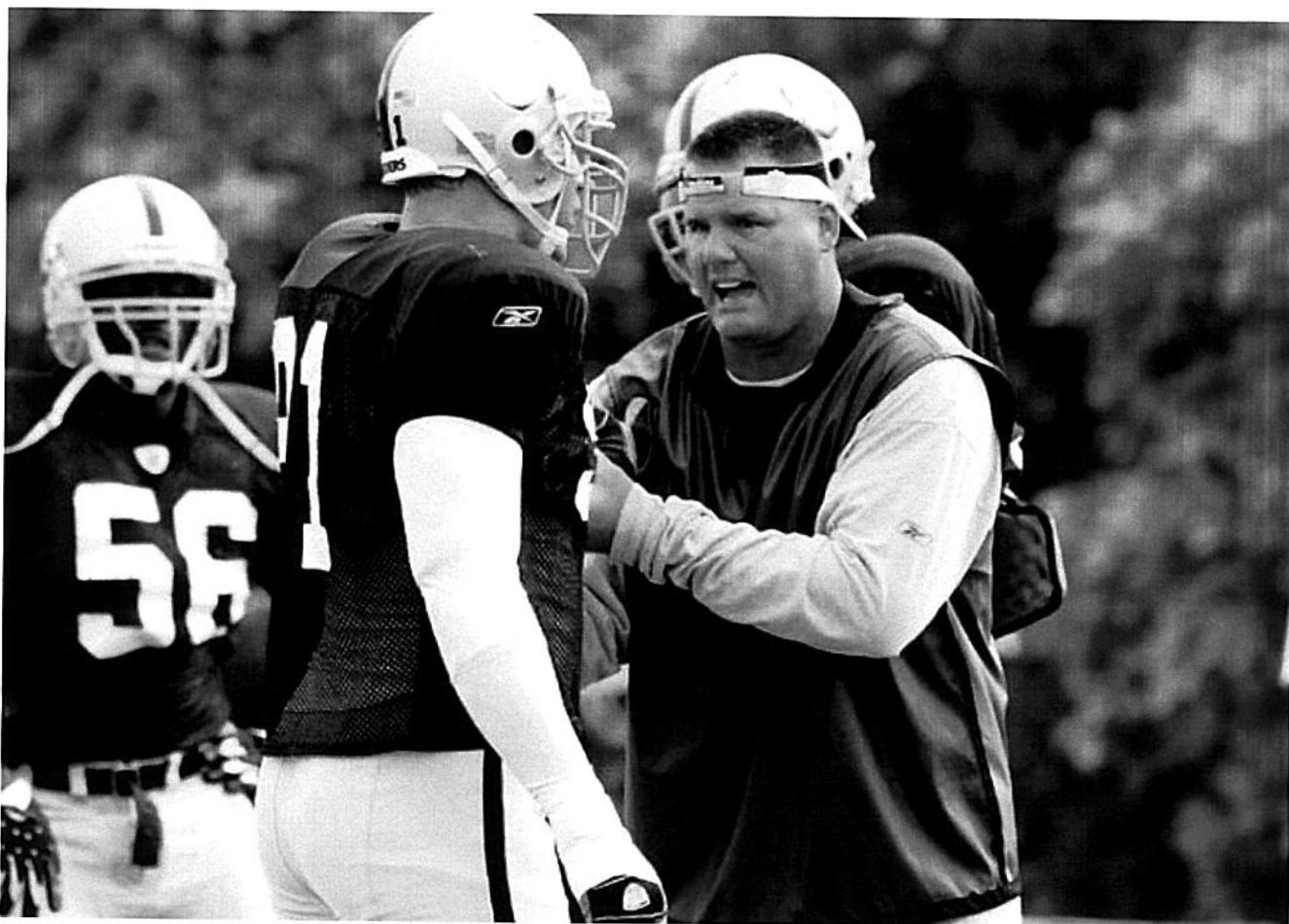
For our show, fellow defensive rookies Anttaj Hawthorne, Kirk Morrison, I and a few others all decided to work together. We planned to create a skit where we would dress up and imitate the defensive coaches by simulating a typical defensive meeting and the tendencies of each coach.

We had Kirk Morrison dressed up as defensive coordinator Rob Ryan, wearing his trademarked visor with paper flowing down it to simulate Ryan's long, silver hair. Morrison also stuffed a pillow under his shirt for added effect.

Hawthorne was dressed as our defensive line coach, who had a terrible limp resulting from his days as a player. As for my role, I was playing the former NFL great and our pass-rush coach, Keith Millard.

Millard was a walking caricature of your typical tobacco-chewing, meat-head jock who slurred his speech from having a mouth full of dip. He also had an interesting accent that was hard to place, but still very distinct.

I spent that week leading up to the rookie show paying close attention to Millard's character nuances. I wanted to make sure I had his likeness down to a T.



Keith Millard with chewing tobacco

As I mentioned, it was tough for me to engage in lighthearted interaction during training camp, so for the most part, my personality was very much subdued. I was more or less on the quiet side and never did anything socially that would draw added attention to myself.

So, it should come as no surprise that most guys on the team were expecting very little from my performance.

When we got up in front of the crowd to perform our loosely rehearsed skit, we quickly received some nice laughs. Morrison did a solid job hitting on some very noticeable coach Ryan phrases. His biggest laughs, however, came from the costume itself and the irony in the obvious contrast between the real Rob Ryan and his impersonator.

Morrison got the ball rolling, and things were going smoothly. Then came my cue to give the typical Keith Millard rant that the team had become familiar with over the weeks prior. After a few seconds of my imitation, the entire room erupted into unbelievable laughter.

Charles Woodson fell off of his seat and was rolling on the floor; guys had tears in their eyes. I couldn't

Every single coach and player in the room was stricken with mad, uncontrollable laughter. I remember glancing over at Millard himself to make sure he was not fuming with anger; luckily, he may have been hardest hit with the giggles.

By the time the skit was over, we all received an unheard-of standing ovation. It just so happened to be the last performance of the night, and when we sat down, the players continued to shower me with praise, saying that was the best rookie-show performance ever.

My Millard impression ended up becoming the only thing anyone could talk to me about for the rest of training camp. I was begged and harassed on a daily basis to get back up on stage to do an encore performance. I constantly declined this request, as it seemed unfair for me to give multiple performances as my reward for doing a great job.

Funnily enough, yet also sadly, the most memorable legacy I left as an Oakland Raider was my ability to give the greatest coach impersonation that anyone had ever witnessed. I was never able to escape the abundant requests and powerful reactions created by that performance.

I look back on it now with a smile and sense of pride. After all, it isn't everyday you can have a room full of guys—many of whom you grew up admiring—on the floor, laughing with tears in their eyes.

I just recently connected with Warren Sapp via Twitter, and he was having trouble placing a memory to my name, though it was vaguely familiar. I reminded him of my Millard performance and witnessed instant recall and excitement from him to hear from me.

This was never how I wanted to make my mark as a Raider, but I suppose it's always better than not making a mark at all.

As for training camp in general, it may have been difficult, and I may have dreaded the thought of it, but I will still forever cherish those days out in the sun, smelling the freshly cut grass and looking up at the sky through my face mask.

Even then, I knew the view through those bars would one day be a distant memory, gone forever.

